



# Letters About Love

**Lesson Aim: To develop strong, godly love toward one another.**

## THE WORSHIP

**Who God Is:** The Spirit Who Guides Us

## THE WORD

**What He Has Done:** God led Paul, John, and Peter to write about love.

**Scripture Focus:** 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a, 12-13; 1 John 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:8

**Key Verse:** 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 **Christ Connection:** Deuteronomy 6:5

## THE WAY

**The Big Question: How will you grow in your love for others?**

## UNIT 5 FOCUS VERSE

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Colossians 3:12-14

<b>Unit 5: The Promise of Guidance</b>			
	Bible Story	What He Has Done	Lesson Aim
22	Letters About Love, 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a, 12-13; 1 John 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:8	God led Paul, John, and Peter to write about love.	To develop strong, godly love toward one another.
23	Letters About Unity, 1 Corinthians 12:12, 15-18, 24b-26; Ephesians 4:1-6, 29-32	God led Paul to write about unity.	To learn what it means to have unity in the body of Christ.
24	Letters About Forgiveness of Sin, Romans 3:23-24; 6:23; 1 John 1:9; James 4:17; Galatians 5:13-14, 19-23	God led Paul and John to write about God's forgiveness.	To know we are all sinners who receive God's complete forgiveness through Jesus.
25	Letters About Forgiving Others, Colossians 3:12-15; 1 Corinthians 13:4-6; Matthew 6:12	God led Paul to write about forgiving others.	To follow Jesus' example in forgiving others.
26	Letters About Peace, Philippians 4:4-9; Colossians 3:15-17; Romans 12:17-18; 2 Corinthians 13:11	God led Paul to write about God's peace.	To pursue peace with one another and to pursue peace of mind.
27	Letters About Perseverance, Hebrews 12:1-3; Philippians 3:12-14; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18	God led Paul and the writer of Hebrews to write about perseverance by focusing on Jesus.	To learn that focusing on Jesus helps us to persevere.

**LEADER'S ENCOURAGEMENT** This week, read John 14:15-27. Please join us in praying, "Thank You, Lord, for giving us the New Testament letters. Help the students understand John's letter about love. Fill us all with Your Spirit so we can love one another. Amen."

**Lesson Aims** are based on reflecting God's character as we participate in His actions to, for, and in the world.

**Take Home Elements:** The Journal Entry, Action Card, and Family Discussion Card may be sent home to encourage students to reflect on the lesson. The Journal Entry is an in-depth personal study. The Action Card is a visual reminder of the Bible story, God's action, and how we can join into that action. The Family Discussion Card gives parents and guardians a way to engage their students in what they are learning.

**Leader's Tip:** For larger gatherings, teach THE WELCOME, THE WORSHIP, and THE WORD in a large group setting and divide into small groups for discussion with THE WAY.

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## Getting started

# THE WELCOME

**Suggestion:** Choose a game that focuses on ideas such as hearts, love, neighbors, letter writing, or mail.

### **ACTIVITY OPTION 1: I LOVE MY NEIGHBOR**

**Purpose:** To introduce the lesson aim of loving each other.

**Supplies:** Chairs

**Directions:**

1. Choose one student to be "It."
2. The remaining students sit on chairs in a large circle. "It" stands in the center of the circle.
3. "It" makes the statement, "I love my neighbor, especially when they \_\_\_\_\_," filling in the blank with something that applies to him/her (e.g. is wearing sneakers, is in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, is a girl). Any students who the statement also applies to must get up and find another seat. At the same time, "It" also finds a seat.
4. The student who is left standing is the new "It" and repeats step 3.
5. Play as long as you like.

### **ACTIVITY OPTION 2: AIR MAIL**

**Purpose:** To introduce the letters in the New Testament written to the churches by Jesus' disciples.

**Supplies:** Sheets of paper, 2 hula hoops\*

**Preparation:** Suspend each team's hula hoop 15-20 feet from their starting line. Hoops can be suspended from the ceiling or taped between two chairs.

\* If you have a smaller group, you may have teams take turns flying their planes through one hoop so everyone can watch.

**Directions:**

1. Divide students into two teams. Place the teams at one end of the play area and the two hoops at the other end of the play area. Give each student 3 sheets of paper.
2. Give teams 5 minutes to make their paper airplanes.
3. Have a helper who counts for each team.
4. On your signal, teams take turns flying their airplanes toward their team's hula hoop. Each plane that goes through the hoop scores a point.
5. The team with the most points wins.



The Spirit who guides us

## THE WORSHIP

**Note to Leader:** The instructions below are suggestions only. Adapt this time of worship to suit your environment, resources, and cultural expression. Encourage students to broaden their view of corporate worship by including a variety of expressions such as group prayer, group praise, silent meditation, singing, listening to music, reading scripture, collecting an offering, drama, dance, visual arts, and/or a physical exploration of nature or neighborhoods.

**Ideas for Optional Visuals:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Today, we worship the Holy Spirit who guides us in living a life of love. When we worship God, we are showing Him how much we love Him. Let's show Him how much we love Him by joining our voices together in song and prayer.**

Read the Unit 5 Focus Verse: Colossians 3:12-14.



Sing worship songs and guide students to focus on the Holy Spirit who guides us.



Read Psalm 36:5-9.



Invite students to offer sentences of praise to God by completing the following sentence:  
**"Lord, we worship You for \_\_\_\_\_."**



Letters about love

## THE WORD Presentation

**Note to Leader:** Adapt this segment to your setting (Sunday School class, youth group, multi-age gathering, youth camp, retreat, etc.). In some settings, you may choose to have a student read the scripture aloud, and then have the leader, in his or her own words, briefly communicate the Teaching Points, the Christ Connection, and the Big Question. In other settings, a teacher, pastor, or other experienced speaker may present a lecture or extended message that includes those same elements.

### Ideas for Optional Visuals:

You may choose to include an object lesson, video clip, drama, dance, song, or work of art to illustrate the teaching points.

Option 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Option 2: \_\_\_\_\_



## TEACHING POINTS

Consider current culture and influences impacting your students, and adjust the teaching accordingly.

*Read the suggested scripture and communicate each of the points noted.*

Last time, we learned Paul spent his two last years in Rome awaiting trial before Caesar. He lived a life faithful to God, speaking boldly to everyone who would listen. Paul was bold in his letter writing as well. He wrote to the churches he started during his travels. His first letter to the Corinthians taught them about the deepest, strongest kind of love—the love of Jesus. At the time, the Corinthians were struggling with moral issues and disagreements due to their selfishness and pride. They needed to be reminded that Jesus called us to love God and to love others (Matthew 22:37-40).

The leader or a student reads 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a, 12-13.

- The Corinthians were putting a priority on spiritual gifts and behaviors that they thought made them look important. In verses 1-3, Paul tells us why love is more important than these things.
- In verses 4-8a, Paul lists 16 qualities of perfect love, giving us a picture of how God loves us. The word used here is “agape,” a self-sacrificing love toward others. It’s more than just a feeling; it’s a choice we make to put others’ needs first without expecting anything in return.
- On our own, we would never be able to love people perfectly, but the Holy Spirit helps us to love as God loves us.
- In verse 12, Paul reminds us that right now we can’t fully understand God, but when Jesus returns, we shall know Him clearly (face to face).
- God’s love for us is unconditional and without limitation. It always seeks our best, helping us to grow into the likeness of Jesus.
- Understanding how much we are loved and accepting God’s love for us allows us to love others with agape love.

# THE WORD Presentation *continued*

In addition to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, the Bible includes 22 letters to the Church written by Luke, Paul, Peter, James, John, and others. In John's first letter, he wrote about loving others.

The leader or a student reads 1 John 4:11-13.

- Even though we can't see God, He can be seen in us when we love others.
- It's not always easy to act in a loving way, but when we choose to love others who have wronged us, it is clear to those around us that God lives in us.

The leader or a student reads 1 Peter 4:8.

- One of the powerful effects of love is the forgiveness that results from it. Love helps us forgive, whereas hate makes it almost impossible to forgive what others have done to us.



Connecting the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Us

## **CHRIST CONNECTION**

In the whole story of God, what's the connection between this New Testament story and the Old Testament?

- None of us are perfect, and we will never be perfect at loving others. Thousands of years before Paul and John wrote about perfect love, Moses shared God's commandments about love.

The leader or a student reads aloud Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

- When Jesus was on earth, He reminded the crowd of these scriptures (Matthew 22:37-40) and called them the two greatest commandments.
- Loving God is the central and most important commandment. When loving God is our first priority, we will desire to be more like Jesus and to love others.
- "Neighbors" aren't just the people who live near us; they include anyone with whom we come in contact.
- Until next time, challenge yourself to see how many ways you can love God and the people He created.



## **THE BIG QUESTION**

Introduce and elaborate on this question. Students will answer it in their discussion group.

**How will you grow in your love for others?**



## THE WAY Discussion



**GETTING STARTED** Display and review the Discussion Group Covenant below:

**We will include everyone here, treating one another with respect and kindness.  
We will encourage everyone here to express their thoughts and opposing views.**

Every student shares his or her best experience or greatest challenge of the past week.



### READ IT AGAIN

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a; 12-13; 1 John 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:8 silently or aloud.

**What is the point Paul is trying to make in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3?**

**What does it mean to you that you will see God face to face?**

**How is God's love expressed through us?**

**According to 1 Peter 4:8, how should we love each other?**

**What do you think Peter means by "love covers over a multitude of sins"?**



**THE BIG QUESTION** Invite students to share their answers.

**How will you grow in your love for others?**



**TAKE ACTION** Lead students in a discussion using the questions below.

**Which of the qualities of love Paul lists do you admire most in others?**

**How has your understanding of loving others changed as you have grown older?**

**The Corinthians were prioritizing what made them look good over love. What have you made more important than loving God and others?**

**Which of the listed qualities of love might be used to describe you?**

**Which of the listed qualities of love is most difficult for you to show in loving others?**

Ask each student to complete this sentence: **God calls us to love one another SO THAT others might \_\_\_\_\_.**



**PRAY** Share prayer requests and answered prayers.

Have students pray with partners, or have the whole group pray together.



**FINAL FIVE MINUTES** When only 5 minutes remain, begin this segment.

Give each student Action Card #22 and Journal Entry #22. **Take home today's Action Card as a reminder of how we can join in what God is doing. Use the Journal Entry as your personal devotional study. Complete your Journal Entries at home and keep them together in a notebook or in your Bible.** Optional: Provide parent or guardian with Family Discussion Card #22.

# PROPHETS & PROMISES

## JOURNAL ENTRY #22

### Letters About Love

1 Corinthians 13:1-8a, 12-13; 1 John 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:8

### WHAT DOES IT SAY?

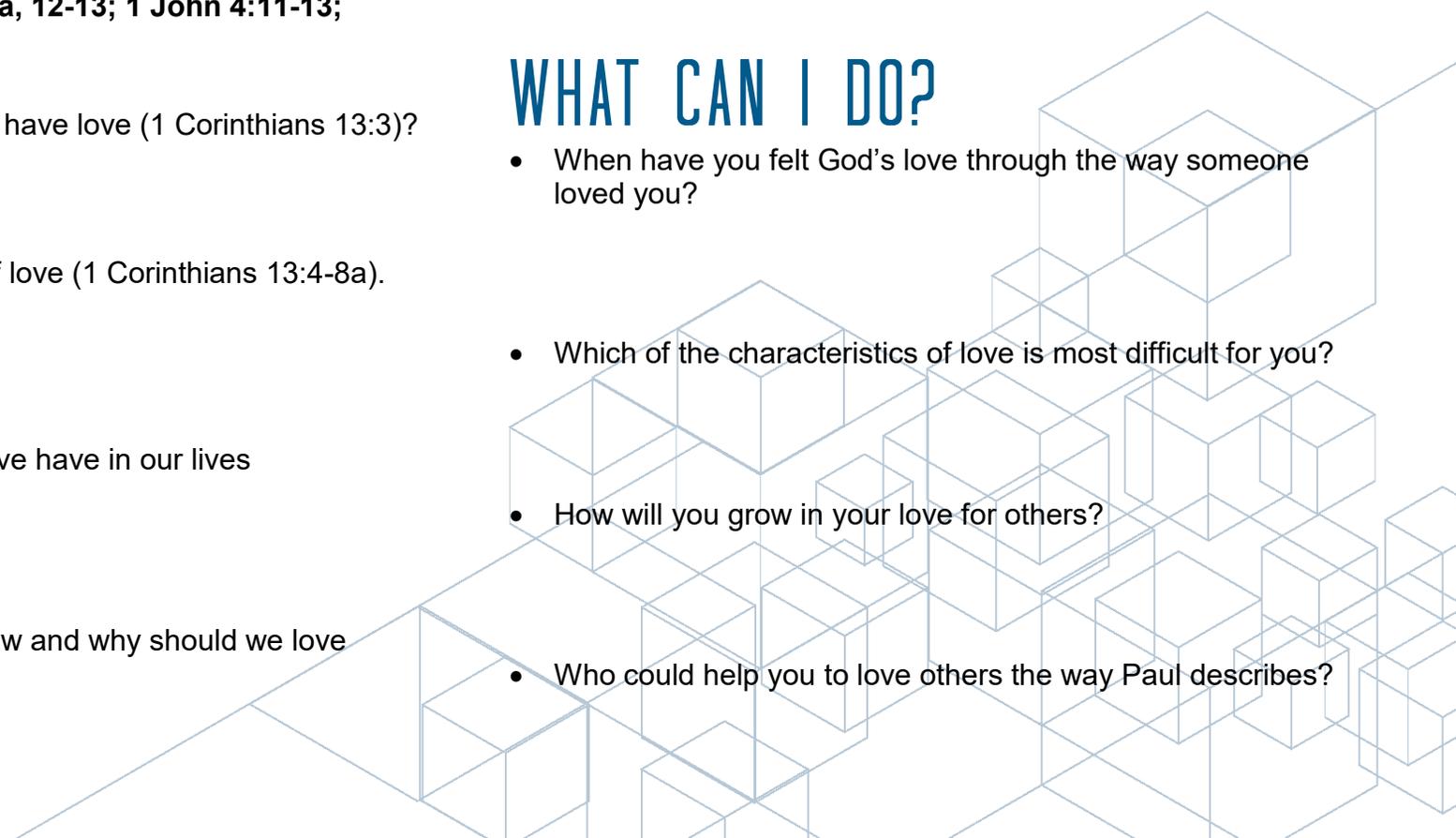
- **Pray!!!** Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what He wants you to learn from this passage.
- **Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a, 12-13; 1 John 4:11-13; 1 Peter 4:8.**
- What do we gain if we don't have love (1 Corinthians 13:3)?
- List the 16 characteristics of love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a).
- What effect should God's love have in our lives (1 John 4:11)?
- According to 1 Peter 4:8, how and why should we love each other?

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Write 1 Corinthians 13:11-13 in your own words on the back of this page.
- Why is love more valuable in God's eyes than spiritual gifts and even faith and hope?
- Paul spoke boldly and endangered his life in order to spread the gospel. How might that make Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13 even more meaningful to you?

### WHAT CAN I DO?

- When have you felt God's love through the way someone loved you?
- Which of the characteristics of love is most difficult for you?
- How will you grow in your love for others?
- Who could help you to love others the way Paul describes?



Action Card #22/P&P

## LETTERS ABOUT LOVE

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-8a, 12-13; 1 JOHN 4:11-13;  
1 PETER 4:8

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TO WRITE ABOUT *LOVE*.

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AS GOD LOVES US.

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